

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

DRAFT
4-13-2010

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-9000a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

Historic name Gordon Building

Other name/site number Karlan Building, 177-5400-00111

2. Location

Street & number 900 & 904 S. Kansas Ave

☐ not for publication

City or town Topeka

☐ vicinity

State Kansas

Code KS

County Shawnee

Code 177

Zip code 66612

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this ☒ nomination
☐ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of
Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property
☒ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant
☐ nationally ☐ statewide ☒ locally. (☐ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title
Kansas State Historical Society

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. (☐ See continuation sheet for additional
Comments.)

Signature of commenting official /Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

☐ entered in the National Register.

☐ See continuation sheet.

☐ determined eligible for the National
Register

☐ See continuation sheet.

☐ determined not eligible for the
National Register

☐ removed from the National
Register

☐ other, (explain:)

Gordon Block
Name of Property

Shawnee County, Kansas
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- ☒ private
☐ public-local
☐ public-State
☐ public-Federal

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

- ☒ building(s)
☐ district
☐ site
☐ structure
☐ object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1		total

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter Categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/TRADE/specialty store

COMMERCE/TRADE/warehouse

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

VACANT/NOT IN USE

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

Late 19th and Early 20th Century American Movements:
Commercial

Late 19th and Early 20th Century Revivals: Classical
Revival

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

Foundation: Brick

Walls: Brick

Roof: Asphalt

Other:

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

Gordon Building
Name of Property

Shawnee County, Kansas
County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "X" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register)

- ☒ **A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history
- ☐ **B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☒ **C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ **D** Property has yielded, or likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- ☐ **A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- ☐ **B** removed from its original location.
- ☐ **C** a birthplace or grave.
- ☐ **D** a cemetery.
- ☐ **E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- ☐ **F** a commemorative property.
- ☐ **G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Commerce

Architecture

Period of Significance

1911-1959

Significant Dates

1911

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/BUILDER

Frank Squires (architect)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- ☐ previously listed in the National Register
- ☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
- ☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey

- ☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering
Record # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- ☒ State Historic Preservation Office
- ☐ Other State agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☐ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☐ Other
- Name of repository: _____

Gordon Building
Name of Property

Shawnee County, Kansas
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property less than one acre

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1

Zone	Easting	Northing

2

Zone	Easting	Northing

3

Zone	Easting	Northing

4

Zone	Easting	Northing

☐ See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

Name/title Christy Davis
Organization Davis Preservation Date 4/24/2009
Street & number 909 1/2 Kansas Ave, Suite 7 Telephone 785-234-5053
City or town Topeka State Kansas Zip code 66612

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items

(Check with SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

Name 900 S. Kansas, LLC, c/o Daryl Craft
Street & number 1129 SW Wanamaker Rd, #200 Telephone 785-200-6604
City or town Topeka State Kansas Zip code 66604

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503

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*Gordon Building
Shawnee County, Kansas*

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Narrative Description

Setting

The Gordon Building is located at 900-904 S. Kansas Avenue, on the south end of downtown Topeka, Kansas (pop. 122,377). The building faces west, toward the east-facing buildings on Kansas Avenue, the city's principal north/south thoroughfare, and the Kansas Statehouse, which lies just two blocks to the west. The building occupies the former site of the four-story brick Copeland Hotel, built in 1883. Over the years, the hotel was expanded to incorporate the adjacent lot to the south. The Gordon Building, which was built after the hotel was destroyed by fire in 1909, maintained the footprint of the Copeland Hotel and appears to have incorporated some of the stone and brick structure of the hotel.

Exterior

Overall

The Gordon Building is a four-story reinforced-concrete, stone and brick building with stone, blond brick and bone terra cotta facing. The west (front) elevation measures 75'. The north (side) elevation measures 150'. The building is made up of two masses – a north mass that measures 50' X 150' and a south mass that measures approximately 25' X 60'. The exterior remains intact with character-defining features including the original blond brick, terra-cotta details, some historic steel and wood windows on the south and east elevations. A redevelopment of the building is reversing changes made after the 1966 tornado. After the tornado destroyed the original double-hung windows on the north and west elevations, the window openings were enclosed with concrete blocks. The blocks have recently been removed and new double-hung enameled aluminum windows installed. Non-historic aluminum storefront windows and doors, aluminum transom covering, and aluminum cantilevered awning were also removed as part of the recent rehabilitation. The building's interior, which is simple, has changed little over time.

West (Front) Elevation

The front elevation is four bays wide, with each bay separated by a brick pilaster. The first, second and third bays are equal widths. The third bay, the stair bay, is one-third the width of the other bays. On the first floor, the first and second bays house a storefront (900-902 S. Kansas) with a centered entrance. The third bay houses an entrance to the stair tower. The fourth bay houses a storefront (904 S. Kansas) with a door on its north end. On the second, third and fourth floors, each bay houses a window opening. The window openings on the first and second bays housed three 1/1 windows each. The third-bay windows were single 1/1 windows. The fourth-bay window openings housed four 1/1 windows. The windows in each of these bays share a continuous cast-stone sill. The fourth-floor window openings are arched, with arches spanning between brick piers. The arches are filled with terra cotta blocks. A decorative terra cotta cornice, with dentilling,

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*Gordon Building
Shawnee County, Kansas*

encircles the north and west elevations – and is interrupted by decorative brackets at the location of each brick pier. Above the cornice is a brick parapet with terra cotta cap. The parapet steps up at the location of each of the brick piers below.

North (Side) Elevation

The north elevation is divided into seven bays, separated by brick piers that cover the building's reinforced concrete structure. A cast-stone water table anchors the building. On the first floor, the first two bays were originally bricked in, with glazed transoms. At some point in the building's history, the bricked-in area was opened and windows installed. Below the first through third bays, at the historic location of a basement access, is a light well/atrium that is topped by an anodized aluminum solarium. The third through seventh bays house aluminum storefront windows which span the widths between brick piers. The piers that separate the bays on the first floor have simple capitals, which support a horizontal band/entablature that separates the first floor from the second through fourth floors. On the second, third and fourth floors, each bay houses a window opening. Each of these window openings housed three windows, separated by mullions. The windows in each of these bays share a continuous cast-stone sill. The fourth-floor window openings are arched, with arches spanning between brick piers. The arches are filled with terra cotta blocks. A decorative terra cotta cornice, with dentilling, encircles the north and west elevations – and is interrupted by decorative brackets at the location of each brick pier. Above the cornice is a brick parapet with terra cotta cap. The parapet steps up at the location of each of the brick piers below.

East (Rear) Elevation

There are two east elevations – one at the alley plane on the north end that spans the width of the first two bays on the front elevation, and another approximately 90' west of the alley on the south end that spans the width of the stair tower and third and fourth bays on the front elevation. The northernmost east elevation has a rubble limestone foundation supporting a brick exterior. The stone water table has three small openings. There are four openings on the first floor, (from left to right) a single window opening, a dock-type door with cantilevered awning, and two small square windows north of the door. There are four single windows on each of the top three stories. A fire escape, accessible from a window on each floor, angles from the second to fourth floors. The rubble limestone east elevation of the southern mass has two windows on each of the second through fourth floors. A one-story projection, with infilled openings, extends east from this mass. The stair tower, to the north of this mass, houses a 2/2 window on each of its floors.

South (Side) Elevation

The south elevation of the 150'-long north mass is rubble limestone. There are five window openings in the basement. There are five small square clerestory windows on the first floor. Each of the second through fourth floors has six 2/2 windows, evenly spaced. The south elevation of the south mass has two openings, a window on the third floor and fire escape opening on the fourth floor. A ladder extends from the fire escape landing to the roof of the adjacent building to the south. Masonry anchors, likely tying this limestone wall to the reinforced concrete construction.

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Interior

Overall

The building's interior reflects the two distinct exterior masses – the 50' X 150' reinforced concrete mass on the north and the 25' X 60' mass on the south. The two distinct masses are separated by the stair-tower bay. In the north mass, long occupied by a furniture store and warehouse, the open plan exposes the reinforced concrete construction. The south mass, originally occupied by the Bell Brothers Music Store and may have incorporated the exterior masonry walls of the Copeland Hotel, evolved separately. Character-defining features in the north mass include simple baseboards on perimeter walls, exposed concrete beams and piers, and historic elevator. There are presently few exposed character-defining features in the south mass, whose finishes include gypsum board walls, and non-historic trim.

Basement

The basement is accessed via an interior formed-concrete stair in the north mass. On the north end, in an area that historically provided access to the basement from the sidewalk level, is a brick and stone plaza. The north mass has an open floorplan with the exception of rooms on its east and west ends. The east end houses mechanical rooms, an elevator, and a simple elevator lobby. There is a storage room on the west end. A fire door on the south wall of the north mass provides access to the south mass via the stair tower bay. There are five rooms in the south mass, accessed via an L-shaped corridor. The light fixtures in this corridor date to the ca. 1960s. Modifications in this space appear to date to the same time period.

First Floor

The first floor has an open floor plan. The building's main entrance, on the west end, has an interior storefront-type airlock. The floor is carpeted. The ceilings are suspended acoustical tile. There is an office in the northeast corner. Finishes in this corner, which include wood and glass, date to ca. 1980. The elevator occupies the southeast corner. West of the elevator is a formed-concrete stair that provides access to the basement and second floor. The first floor of the south mass historically housed a storefront, originally used by the Bell Brothers Music Store. An exposed cast-iron column on the east end lends credence to the theory that the south mass incorporates some elements of the Copeland Hotel, which was destroyed by fire. There is a walled-in office on the southwest corner and a stair to the basement in the northeast corner. The finishes include carpeted floors, and suspended acoustical ceilings.

Second Through Fourth Floors

The second through fourth floors of the north mass have open floorplans. These floors are accessible via an elevator that occupies this mass's southeast corner and via the stair that separates the north and south masses. Each of the upper floors in the south mass is unique. Over the years, these spaces were modified for furniture displays. The second and fourth floors have non-historic gypsum board walls and trim. There are some plaster walls with wood trim on the third floor. A corridor runs north/south from the archway at the junction of the stair tower. The corridor opens to four rooms.

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Gordon Building
Shawnee County, Kansas

Statement of Significance

The Gordon Building is being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A in the area of Commerce for its association with Karlan Furniture, a Topeka institution from the 1910s to the 1980s; under Criterion B for its association with Topeka pioneer J. C. Gordon; and under Criterion C as an example of early Twentieth Century commercial architecture designed by Topeka architect Frank Squires and executed by pioneer Topeka contractor Henry Bennett.

A Brief History of Topeka

Topeka was founded in late 1854 by leaders of the New England Emigrant Aid Company, which chose the location where a branch of the Oregon Trail crossed the Kansas River. By the time the territorial legislature incorporated Topeka in 1857, the city boasted a population of 600, third to pro-slavery towns Atchison and Leavenworth. By 1858, however, free-staters outnumbered pro-slavery settlers; and the free-state Wyandotte Constitution designated Topeka as the temporary capital in 1859. When Kansas entered the Union as a free state in 1861, Topeka was named permanent state capital.

In the years following the Civil War, Topeka's population exploded. Between 1860 and 1870, the population grew 662% from 759 to 5790. It tripled to 15,528 by 1880; and doubled to 31,007 by 1890.¹ Among the city's new residents were thousands of African Americans, who fled the post-Reconstruction south in the Black Exodus.

Topeka's fate was tied closely to that of the railroad, particularly that of the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe, which was chartered by Topeka town founder Cyrus K. Holliday in 1859. After the railroad began laying track in the late 1860s, it played a significant role in the state's settlement by marketing land to immigrant farmers. In 1878, the Santa Fe established its general offices and machine shops in Topeka. The expansion of the Santa Fe and arrival of other railroads contributed to an extraordinary real estate boom in the 1880s. In 1888 alone, 3000 new buildings were built.

The city benefitted from the railroad's success – and bore the brunt of the railroad's failures. Like most railroads, the Santa Fe over-expanded in the 1880s and went bankrupt in the 1890s. When the 1880s boom busted, 5000 people left the deflated city.²

¹ U. S. Census, 1860, 1870, 1880, 1890.

² Frank Blackmar, *Kansas: a cyclopedia of state history, embracing events, institutions, industries, counties, cities, towns, prominent persons, etc.* (Chicago: Standard Publishing Co., 1912), 811-815.

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**Gordon Building
Shawnee County, Kansas**

It was not until the 1910s that the city's population finally recovered and the business elite began to build again. The city steadily grew in the first half of the twentieth century, doubling between 1900 and 1940, when the population reached 67,833.³ During the Progressive Era, Topeka was at the center of reform and religious activities. In 1919, the Menninger Clinic, which became a nationwide leader in moral psychiatric treatment, opened. Its founder Dr. Karl Menninger wrote the 1930 national bestseller *The Human Mind*, an early study of human behavior. Other reform movements included the Social Gospel movement, which applied Christian principals to social problems. In his bestseller *In His Steps*, Topeka minister Charles Sheldon asked Christian reformers to make decisions based upon "What Would Jesus Do?"⁴ Topeka is also known as the birthplace of Pentecostalism, a religious movement distinguished by the incidence of glossolalia.⁵

Topeka attracted national attention in the 1930s, when it was home to national figures in both the Democratic and Republican Parties. Georgia Neese Clark Gray, who served as the Democratic National Committee Chairwoman, would later become the first woman to hold the position of U. S. Treasurer.⁶ Better known was Kansas Governor Alf Landon, who famously challenged Franklin Roosevelt in the presidential race of 1936.

The Topeka Army Air Field, later known as Forbes Field, and other industries attracted new residents during World War II. Among the war-related industries was the Goodyear Tire Plant, which has remained a staple of the local economy for more than six decades.⁷ In the years following the war, Topeka made national news for its role in the landmark Supreme Court Case *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*. The historic desegregation case struck down the "separate but equal" doctrine and ushered in the broader Civil Rights Movement.

A series of natural disasters in the mid twentieth century greatly affected the community. The 1951 flood forced 17,000 Topekans from their homes and destroyed businesses, like the Morrell Meat Packing Plant, resulting in the loss of 1000 jobs.⁸ A devastating tornado in 1966 killed 13 people, destroyed neighborhoods, and caused \$100 million in damage to the city's buildings, including the Kansas Statehouse.⁹

³ U. S. Census.

⁴ "The Rev. Charles Sheldon – In His Name," *Topeka Capital Journal* 24 November 2001; See Charles Sheldon, *In His Steps: What Would Jesus Do?* (Chicago: Advance Publishing Co., 1898).

⁵ "Pentecostal movement has its roots in Topeka," *Topeka Capital-Journal* 17 August 1997.

⁶ "Kansans have had many White House ties," *Topeka Capital-Journal* 16 May 2004.

⁷ Topeka Chamber of Commerce.

⁸ "Flood of the Century: Reflections of the Flood" *Topeka Capital-Journal* 8 July 2001. Also Topeka Chamber of Commerce.

⁹ "1966 Tornado – Hard Times," *Topeka Capital-Journal* 8 June 2006.

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Gordon Building
Shawnee County, Kansas

Despite these setbacks, the city's population nearly doubled from 67,833 to 125,011 between 1940 and 1970.¹⁰ The population has remained steady since that time. Many of the city's residents are among the 42,000 state employees.

John Copeland Gordon (Developer)

The Gordon Building was commissioned by hotelier and developer J. C. Gordon, known by his friends as "Cope." Gordon was born in New York in May 1831 and was still a young man when he joined in the migration to Lawrence, Kansas in 1854. In 1855, Gordon moved to Topeka where he took up farming. Soon thereafter, he partnered with Asaph Allen to form the mercantile firm Allen and Gordon, which occupied the city's first brick commercial building. In 1856, he bought out his partner's share. He later sold the firm to his brother.

Gordon entered the hotel business in 1863, when he rented the Topeka House Hotel at 5th and Kansas. In 1864, he remodeled a store into a fifteen-room hotel. This was the start of the Gordon House Hotel. Gordon sold the hotel in 1881 and laid plans for the new Copeland Hotel on the site today occupied by the Gordon Building. The Copeland Hotel, which opened in 1883, catered to state officials and Republican politicians, serving as the official residence for "Governors Glick, Martin, Humphreys and Morrill." In the late 1880s, Gordon enlarged the hotel to ninety-five rooms.

After the Copeland was destroyed in a devastating fire in 1909, Gordon announced plans to replace it with the \$50,000 business block that would come to be known as the Gordon Building. Although Gordon was 80 years old at the time of the building's construction, he personally supervised the work. According to the *Topeka Capital*, Gordon was "frequently found at the building when work starts in the morning and puts in as many hours as the mechanics who are working by the day"

When the building was completed, Gordon moved into quarters there. He was the city's "oldest living resident" when he died at the age of 84 in 1915. Gordon's descendants owned the Gordon Building until the 1980s, when it sold the building to the Karlan Furniture Company, which had occupied it since 1914.¹¹

Frank Squires (Architect)

To design the building, J. C. Gordon hired well-known Topeka architect Frank Squires. Squires was born in Columbus, Ohio in 1871 and moved to Topeka as a boy. At the age of 17, Squires began an apprenticeship with Topeka architect J. C. Holland. Thereafter, he attended Columbia

¹⁰ U. S. Census.

¹¹ *Topeka Daily Capital* 14 September 1910; *Topeka Capital* 8 October 1915; *Topeka Daily Capital* 14 May 1911; "Karlan Firm Buys Building," *Topeka Capital-Journal*, in Gordon Building Clippings files, Topeka Room, Topeka-Shawnee County Public Library.

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University School of Architecture, one of the nation's first formal architecture programs. Some sources say that Squires worked at an architecture firm in Toledo, Ohio before returning to Topeka.

From 1895 to 1897, Squires served in the position of State Architect, overseeing the construction of the central wing of the statehouse. Among his early commissions were the Jewell County Jail and Burr Oak School. In 1898 or 1903 (sources vary), Squires partnered with his mentor J. C. Holland. Together, the pair designed a number of courthouses, including those in Harvey (razed), and Marion (extant) Counties. In 1915 or 1920 (sources vary), after Holland's son joined the firm, Holland and Squires parted ways.

Among the buildings Squires designed on his own were the Rooks County Courthouse (1924, NRHP), Junction City High School (1903, NRHP), Junction City Public Library (Topeka, NRHP), and Woman's Club Building (Women's Club Building, NRHP). Squires died of a stroke in 1934.¹²

Henry Bennett (Contractor)

The contract for the construction of the Gordon Building was awarded to the construction firm of Henry Bennett. Henry Bennett was born in Chicago in 1841. At the age of 15, Bennett entered a three-year carpentry apprenticeship. In 1866, after a stint in the Union Army in the Civil War, Bennett married Mary Vreeland, daughter of an established Chicago contractor. His family connections and experience in the trade left Bennett perfectly poised to help re-build Chicago after the 1871 fire. At the time of the Panic of 1873, Bennett's firm had 250 employees. In 1876, he left Chicago and moved to a Kansas stock farm.

Bennett soon left the ranks of the landed gentry and re-entered the construction business. In 1880, he moved to Topeka where he managed to gain a number of lucrative government contracts, including institutional buildings at the state mental hospitals in Topeka and Osawatomie, the Topeka Public Library, and buildings at Kansas State University. In addition, his firm remodeled the East Wing of the Kansas Statehouse. He also obtained contracts with the Topeka-based Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railway. Among those projects was Hutchinson's Bisonte Hotel (razed) and Topeka's Santa Fe Office Building.

Bennett's return to the construction business coincided with a statewide real estate boom. Among his well-known 1880s commercial buildings were the Crawford Building (1888, NRHP), Columbian Building (1888 NRHP), and Devon Apartments/Bennett's Flats (1887, NRHP). In addition, Bennett constructed the Copeland Hotel (1883), which the Gordon Building replaced.

¹² *Topeka Capital Journal* 5 November 2000; National Register Nomination, Burr Oak School; "F.C. Squires Dies," *Topeka State Journal* 10 March 1934.

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Bennett escaped the economic depression that followed the 1880s boom by constructing railroad buildings in Mexico and returning to Chicago to construct Territorial Buildings for Oklahoma, Arizona, New Mexico and Alaska at the 1893 Worlds Columbian Exposition. The construction business in Kansas did not improve until the 1910s, when Bennett's contracts included the Gordon Building, Grace Episcopal Cathedral (1910) and the H. P. Dillon House (1913, NRHP). In about 1915, just a few years after completing the Gordon Building, Bennett passed the operation of the business to his two sons, Henry Jr. and J. Albert.¹³

Karlan Furniture

Karlan Furniture occupied the Gordon Building from 1914 until the 1980s. Charles A. Karlan was born in Detroit in 1874. He entered the furniture business in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. In 1905, after serving in the Spanish-American War, Karlan moved to Topeka to purchase the E. W. Hughes Furniture Company and establish "the largest and best equipped furniture factory and retail establishment in Kansas." At the time Karlan moved into the Gordon Building, he had just completed manufacturing the furnishings for the Memorial Building (1914, NRHP). His firm also provided the rugs for the lieutenant governor's office, wood panels for the Senate Chamber at the Statehouse, and furniture for the Kansas Council of Defense during World War I. The Gordon Building provided a warehouse and retail space for the company through the 1980s. From 1990 until late 2007, the building was occupied by the Thompson-Crawley Furniture Company. Like Karlan, Thompson-Crawley provided furniture for local, county and state government.¹⁴

Architecture

The building is significant as an intact example of Commercial Style architecture with Classical Revival details. The Commercial Style was the predominant commercial architectural style in the early twentieth century (1910s to 1930s). Unlike their nineteenth-century predecessors, these buildings featured simple lines, without applied or projecting decorative elements such as elaborate cornices. Their design placed an emphasis on fire-resistance with fire-proof materials such as reinforced concrete, brick and steel. In addition to their clean lines, Commercial-Style buildings are defined by a number of exterior features such as parapets capped with squared-off stone or concrete, rough brick with raked mortar joints, and double-hung windows with square upper and lower sashes – in contrast to the tall, narrow windows seen in late-nineteenth-century commercial buildings. These windows can be 1/1 double-hung sash, or a multiple-pane upper sash over a single-pane lower sash. Stylistic elements were limited to brick corbelling or the incorporation of integrated decorative masonry elements such as geometric stone patterns or applied terra cotta.

¹³ Blackmar; Shawnee County Historical Society; *Topeka State Journal* 28 January 1924; William E. Connelley, *A Standard History of Kansas and Kansans* (Chicago: Lewis Publishing Company, 1918).

¹⁴ Connelley, *Kansas and Kansans*.

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The architectural details on the Gordon Building are Classical Revival. One of the revival styles popular in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Classical Revival took its cues from Greek and Roman architecture. While some Classical Revival buildings were literal interpretations of Greek and Roman buildings - with two-story columns, pediments and entablatures - others were more subtly influenced. Among the Gordon Building's Classical Revival details are its pedimented entablature with dentils, regularly spaced pilasters, glazed terra cotta and arch-topped window openings.¹⁵

The Gordon Building was clad in brick and terra cotta, the materials of choice for 1910s commercial buildings. American terra cotta production began in the 1860s and was popularized in the 1870s in New York and Chicago buildings. By the 1910s, terra cotta was being mass produced and was available in stock patterns in white, ivory and cream.

Summary

The Gordon Building is being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A in the area of Commerce for its association with Karlan Furniture, a Topeka institution from the 1910s to the 1980s; and under Criterion C as an example of early Twentieth Century commercial architecture designed by Topeka architect Frank Squires and executed by pioneer Topeka contractor Henry Bennett.

¹⁵ Virginia and Lee McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1998), 378-385; John C. Poppeliers and S. Allen Chambers, Jr., *What Style is It: A Guide to American Architecture* (New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2003), 90-97.

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**Gordon Building
Shawnee County, Kansas**

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*Gordon Building
Shawnee County, Kansas*

Verbal Boundary Description

The nominated property covers two parcels. The first parcel (900-902 S. Kansas Ave) includes the north mass and stair tower. The second parcel (904 S. Kansas Ave) includes the south mass. The legal descriptions for these parcels are as follows: 1) ORIGINAL TOWN , Lot 290 + , KANSAS AVE LOT 290 & N 18.304 FT O F LOT 292 SECTION 31 TOWNSHIP 11 RANGE 16; 2) ORIGINAL TOWN , Lot 292 + , KANSAS AVE S 6.696 FT LOT 292 & ALL OF LOT 294 SECTION 31 TOWNSHIP 11 RANGE 16

Boundary Justification

The above describes the boundaries of the two parcels on which the Gordon Building sits.

Photographs

Forthcoming...



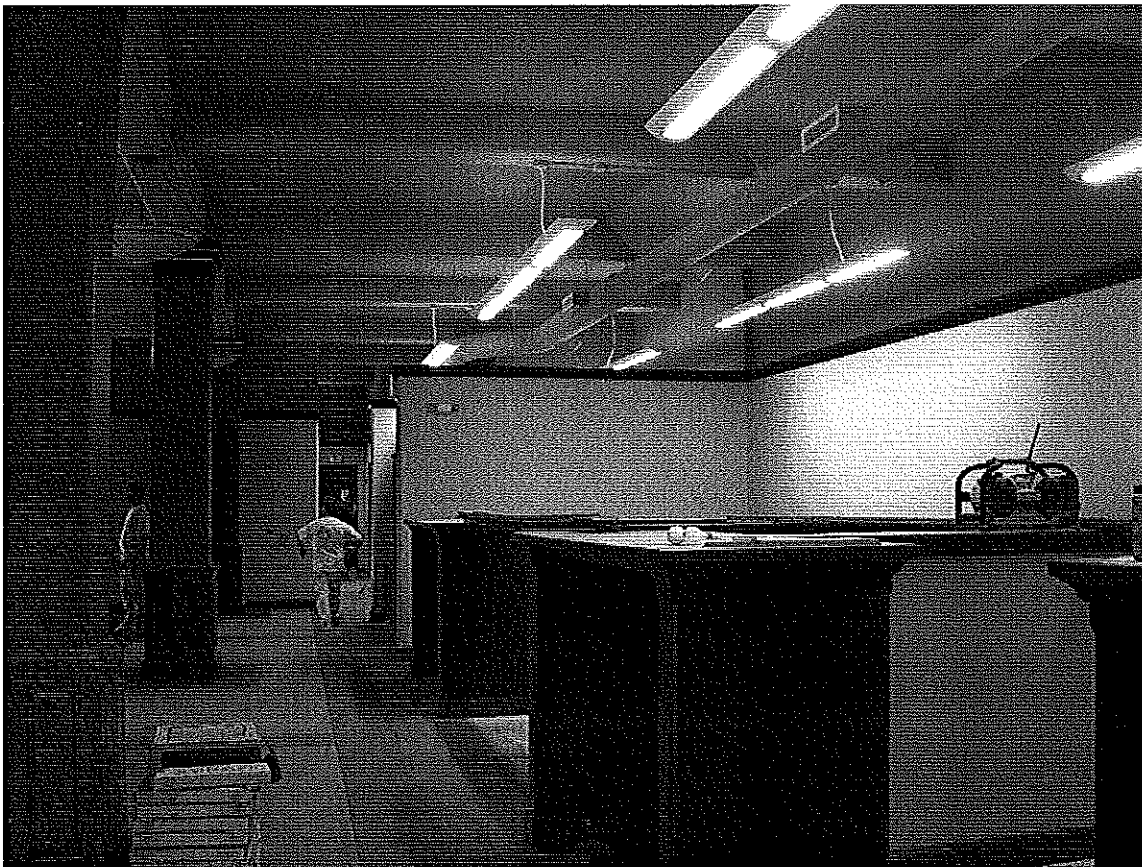
Gordon Building, before rehabilitation



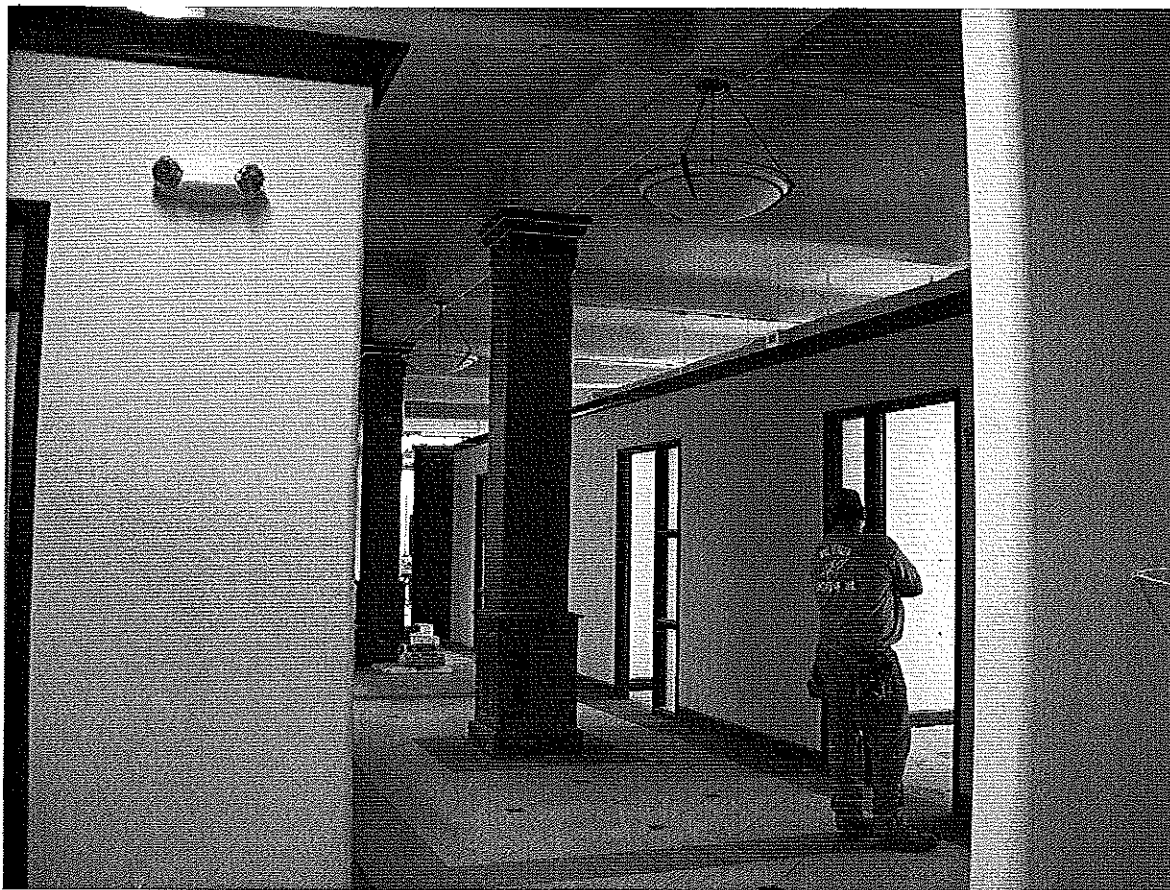
April 2010 – Gordon Building, northwest corner



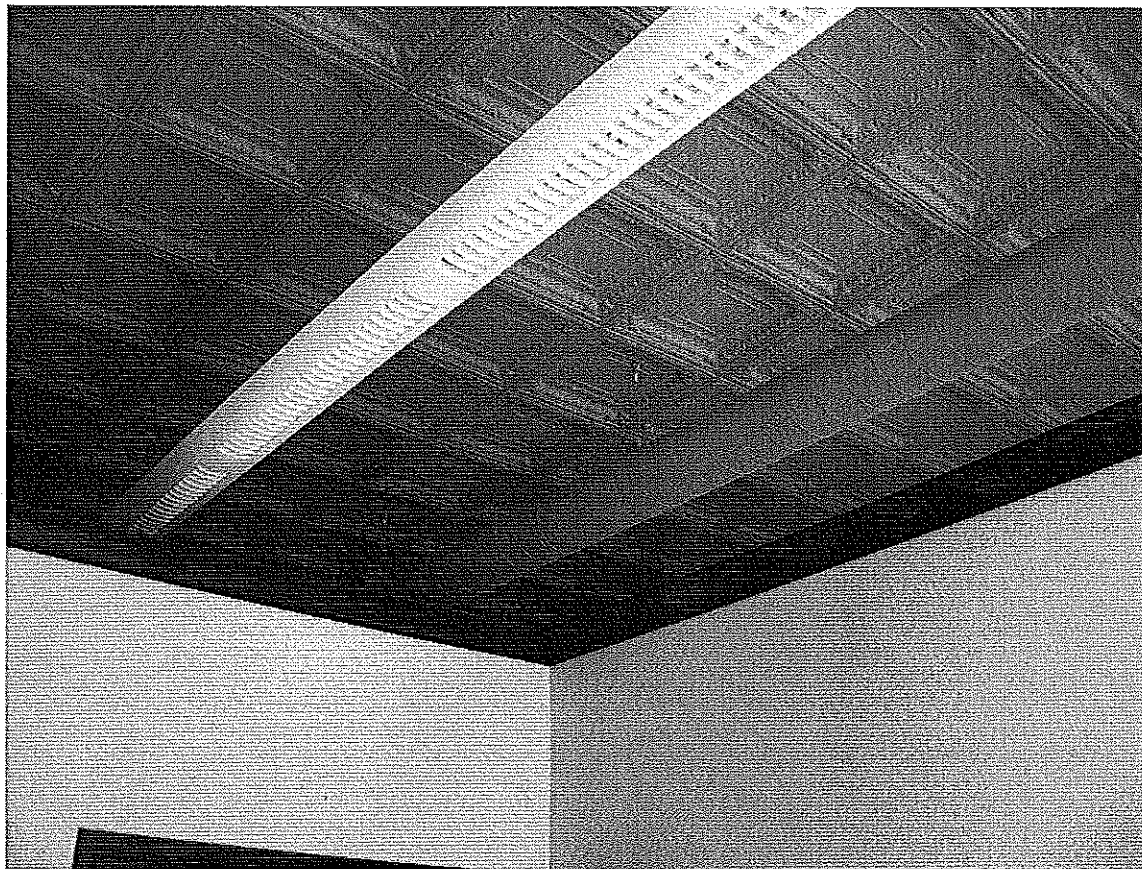
April 2010: Gordon Building, west elevation



April 2010 – Gordon Building, first floor interior



April 2010 – Gordon Building, first floor interior



April 2010 – Gordon Building, first floor interior